

OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED

In the HIGH-CHURCH of *Edinburgh*,

January 7. 1751.

BEFORE

The SOCIETY for propagating
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

At their Anniversary Meeting.

BY THE

Late Rev. Mr. FREDERICK CARMICHAEL,
One of the Ministers of *Edinburgh*.

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STEEL R M O N

THE SECRET OF THE
KNOWLEDGE

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GALATIANS IV. 18.

*But it is good to be zealously affected always
in a good thing.*

MANY of the *Jews* who embraced
the religion of Christ, when it was
first published by the apostles, still retain-
ed too great a fondness for the ritual insti-
tutions of *Moses*. They were bred up in
such a profound veneration of their law,
that they could not be persuaded that any
thing could make void their obligation to

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obey

obey it. They inclined therefore to blend the two dispensations, and join the observation of the legal ceremonies to the pure and spiritual precepts of the Gospel. This weakness of the *Jewish* converts was for some time connived at, till in the height of their zeal they would have imposed circumcision, and their other rites on the gentiles who had embraced the Christian faith : then the apostles were obliged with boldness to assert that *liberty with which Christ had made them free* ; to command the gentiles to maintain the native simplicity of the Gospel, and to resist those who would wreath about their necks a yoke which neither the *Jews* nor their fathers had been able to bear.

As certain false teachers of this kind had crept in amongst the *Galatians*, disturbing their peace, and corrupting the purity of the Gospel ; it was the apostle's design in this epistle to warn these Christians of their danger, if they allowed them-

themselves to be seduced into such errors, and held not fast the profession of the true faith, in which they had been instructed. Among the other arts used to deceive the *Galatians*, it had been insinuated, that *Paul*, who had first preached the Gospel to them, was not truly an apostle clothed with such authority as *Peter* and others of the circumcision: in opposition to which, the inspired writer begins with a solemn vindication of his apostleship, showing, that in no spiritual gift, or extraordinary power, he was inferior to the chief of the apostles.

FROM this he proceeds to show, by several arguments, how inconsistent these new doctrines were with the nature, design, and extent of the Gospel covenant. And that he might leave no means untried to guard them against the dangerous arts of these seducers, in the context he puts them in mind of the love and affection, the respect and veneration which they had

before shown for himself; expostulating with them concerning the occasion of so sudden a change; that they who had lately *received him as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ*, and were ready, as the apostle strongly expresses it, to *have pluckt out their very eyes, and have given them to him*, should now be so fond of other teachers, who were his avowed opposers, and of another Gospel, so contrary to that which he had taught them, and which they had received as the greatest *blessedness*. Upon this occasion he introduces the general proposition, which I have read as the foundation of the present discourse. *It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*. In the words we have a duty required of us, to be *zealously affected*; a limitation of this duty, that we must be *zealously affected in a good thing*; and a commendation of the duty, that it is *good* to be thus zealously affected in a good thing. In further discoursing on them, I shall, with divine assistance, proceed in the following method.

I. I SHALL

I. I SHALL explain the nature of zeal in general.

II. I SHALL lay before you the necessary qualifications of Christian zeal; by which we may be directed in the exercise of it, and enabled to distinguish betwixt true and false zeal.

III. I SHALL show the excellency, and the happy effects of true Christian zeal.

AND, in the last place, make improvement of the subject.

First, I SHALL endeavour to explain the nature of zeal in general. Ancient writers in that language from which we have borrowed the word *zeal*, use it indifferently in a good or bad sense, but seldom or never in a religious one: with them it commonly signifies warmth and fervour, an earnest desire of some temporal good; such a desire, as is attended with pain and uneasiness, when others are possessed of that good which we are deprived of. They frequently

frequently apply it to denote emulation, and that sort of it too which is accompanied with envy, contention and strife. In the like bad sense the word is frequently used by the writers of the New Testament; and zeal is numbered by them amongst the *works of the flesh*, amongst the basest and most unworthy passions. Our translators indeed, in rendering these passages, have prudently declined to use the word *zeal*; applying other words, which more clearly convey to the *English* reader the meaning and import of the original. Thus they express it by *envy* and *envyings*, *emulation*, *indignation*, and the like, with the particular instances of which I shall not now detain you.

BUT is it not just matter of regret and sorrow, that in all the ages of the church there have been too many Christians zealous rather in this sense of the word than in the other, which it also frequently bears in scripture, and which expresses one of the brightest ornaments of the true Christian?

istian? Sometimes it denotes an ardent desire of promoting the glory of God, and the honour of his worship, in opposition to a profane indifference, and a cold unconcern about these things. *The zeal of thine house*, saith our Lord, applying the words of the Psalmist, *bath eaten me up*.^{*} By this the apostle expresses the sincere and earnest desire he had for the salvation of the souls of men. *I am zealous of you*, says he to the *Corinthians*, *with a godly zeal*.[†] In the same terms he speaks of the generous charity which that church had shewn in relieving the necessities of the saints. *I know the forwardness of your mind*, says he, *and your zeal which hath provoked many*.[‡] *It is good*, says he again, *to be zealously affected always in a good thing*.

Now from these passages we may be able to form some notion of that zeal which is required of Christians, and which is a necessary qualification in the

^{*} John ii. 17. [†] 2 Cor. xi. 2. [‡] 2 Cor. ix. 2.

service of God. It is a vehement affection of mind, which incites us earnestly to wish and contend for the honour of God, and for the prevalency of true and undefiled religion in ourselves and others; and which moves us, on the other hand, constantly and irreconcilably to oppose whatever is contrary to these noble ends. We are not then to conceive of Christian zeal, as if it were one single affection of the soul, but as a mixture of many holy and spiritual affections. It is not properly one particular grace, but rather a gracious constitution of the whole mind. Zeal sways all the thoughts, and governs the whole will of the true Christian. Zeal gives a double measure of force and activity to that religion, which before was sincere. Zeal, in short, is to the spiritual life, what health and strength is to the natural; it renders that cheerful and vigorous, which otherways would but breath and move. So much may suffice as to the first thing proposed, the stating and explaining

plaining the just notion of zeal in general.
Let us now proceed to the

Second THING proposed, namely, To lay before you the necessary qualifications of this zeal, by which we may be directed in the exercise of it, and be enabled to distinguish between true and false zeal.

SUCH is the weakness and infirmity of human nature, that here we are ready to be entangled in the most dangerous mistakes and errors. It is no doubt extremely hard so to moderate our affections towards objects which are widely different in themselves, as not to err in their measure and degree. It is in a most particular manner difficult to manage our zeal in the hatred of, and opposition to that which is evil, so as that it shall at the same time be consistent with that love and kindness, that humility and prudence, that meekness and gentleness which are required of Christians ; yet certain it is, that if our zeal be inconsistent
with

with these graces, we thereby rather dishonour God than promote his glory, and we do more to hurt than to benefit our souls.

THIS ought to be attended to with the greater care, that however valuable an ornament true zeal may be to the Christian, yet zeal, if misguided or misapplied, may prove the source of the most dreadful mischiefs : nay, such zeal has actually, in numberless instances, brought the greatest discredit on religion, and produced the most fatal desolation in the church of Christ. To direct us then in the management of zeal, and to guard us against such mistakes, let us attend to the following particulars.

1st, OUR zeal must always be according to knowledge ; and if it is not so, it is highly blameable, for a very obvious reason, because it is extremely dangerous. This kind of zeal the apostle condemns in his brethren the *Jews* ; *I bear them record*,
says

says he, *that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.* * Nay, he acknowledges, that before his conversion, he himself was zealous in this manner; and that this zeal led him to *persecute the church of Christ, and to think himself bound to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus.* A Christian, as the apostle tells us, ought to be ready to *give to him that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him;* and surely he is as much bound to be able to give a reason of the zeal that is in him.

TRUE Christian zeal then must not only be free from all hypocrisy and guile, but it must be founded on knowledge, and proceed from a well informed judgment. We must love and desire that which we know and are assured to be worthy of our love and pursuit; and we must oppose that which on good grounds we know to be criminal and dangerous;

* Rom. x. 2.

for otherways our zeal may prove but a foolish heat or a blind fury. And from this rule, so obvious and reasonable in itself, we may safely infer, that great zeal in persons notoriously ignorant must always be liable to great suspicion. True zeal will always arise from true knowledge, will always be accompanied with it, and governed by it.

2dly, OUR zeal must be exercised concerning that which is good in itself, and the measures of it must be regulated with prudence, according to the real importance of the object about which it is employed. It is only *in a good thing*, as the apostle directs in the text, that *it is good to be zealously affected*. We must not only be assured in general, that our zeal is not entirely misplaced, as to the object of it; but we must be able to judge of its greater or lesser importance, as to the great ends of religion, the honour and glory of God, and the salvation of mankind; and we
must

must temper and proportion our zeal accordingly. If this is neglected, the consequence will infallibly be, that indiscreetly laying out our warmth and heat on lesser things, we will be ready either altogether to neglect, or coldly to pursue what is of much higher concern and moment.

OF this kind of false zeal we find our blessed Lord accusing the Scribes and Pharisees of old. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, says he, for ye pay tithe of mint, anise and cumin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and truth: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. ‡* Such are

‡ Math. xxiii. 23---27.

the unhappy consequences of our spending our zeal on little matters : it naturally takes off our minds from what is of higher moment, and leaves us no zeal or fervency to be laid out on those things in which the interests of religion and of our immortal souls are more nearly concerned. As it is too certain a sign of folly and weakness to be earnest and eager for all things alike, so the wise, the prudent Christian will distinguish between the several objects on which he employs his zeal, and allow to each that measure of concern and warmth, which its weight and moment deserves. But then,

3dly, SUPPOSING us to be assured that the object of our zeal is right in itself, and perhaps too a matter of great concernment ; yet we must take care, that it carry us not unawares into unlawful means in the prosecution of its end. That the goodness of the end will sanctify the means, that we may do evil that good may come

come of it, are scandalous principles; and the apostle expressly asserts it to be a damnable sin, to charge such doctrines on the religion of the blessed Jesus. *Some affirm, says he, that we say, let us do evil that good may come, whose damnation is just.*† The true Christian will watch over himself, lest he fall into this snare; and in particular will find the exercise of care and circumspection needful for this end, when he is called to exert his zeal in opposing what he believes to be dishonourable to God, and contrary to pure religion.

LOVE to God and to the truths of God; desire to promote his glory and the happiness of mankind, are affections which ought to have the first and the chief place in our hearts. In these we can never be too fervent, for they will never carry us beyond due bounds. On the other hand, our hatred against those things which

† Rom. iii. 8.

God hates, our indignation against whatever is displeasing and dishonourable to him; these, no doubt, should also employ our zeal, and are acceptable in the sight of God. But here we must beware and carefully attend, lest this kind of zeal exceed its due bounds, and insensibly degenerate into the most vitious and hurtful passions, into anger and ill-nature, wrath and malice. For such is the nature of the human heart, that there is great danger, lest, under the appearance of hatred to sin, our zeal carry us further than mere detestation of the sin itself, and lead us unawares to the hatred of the person, whom we are commanded to pity and to pray for, and with meekness and gentleness to endeavour his recovery. And from this we are led to notice another very probable mark by which we may distinguish between the zeal that becomes a Christian, and those other passions that have sometimes passed under this honourable name; this I shall mention as the

4th. AND last thing under this head,
That true Christian zeal will appear
more in the mild and gentle affections,
than in those that are wrathful and
violent. It will discover itself more in
the ardency of his love to God, in the
fervency of his devotion, in the warmth
of his kindness and charity towards his
brethren, than in the vehemence of his
hatred and detestation and anger, even
tho' these passions are not altogether mis-
applied as to their objects.

It has been justly observed by an in-
genious author, that zeal should be in re-
ligion, what true courage is in human
nature. And as that is the truest courage,
which is not only firm and undaunted,
but at the same time calm and inoffensive,
slow to anger, and not ready to be provok-
ed; so that is true Christian zeal, which is
not only constant daring and fearless, but
meek and compassionate, long-suffering
and *easy to be entreated*, without bitterness

or gall. Must it not be matter of wonder to every one who seriously reflects upon it, that in the profession of such a religion as the Christian, our zeal should show itself so very little in these gentler passions, and should vent itself almost always in those of an opposite nature? Yet is this so much the case, that our very notions of zeal are almost entirely preverted by it; and no sooner we hear the name, than we are ready to form the idea of something harsh and austere, unfriendly and censorious. But certain it is, that as no religion is *pure*, that is not at the same time *peaceable* and gentle, so no zeal is true, spiritual, and Christian, that is not merciful, charitable and kind.

By attending to these things we may easily distinguish true Christian zeal from the unruly heats of pride and passion, and the implacable fury of revenge. These indeed have frequently been concealed under the honourable name of zeal for God and his service; and under this cover
have

have often brought the greatest discredit on the religion of Jesus, and caused his blessed name to be abhorred and blasphemed by *them that are without*: when men professing a zeal for God, have pretended to propagate the religion of Christ, and promote his glory in the world, not by the demonstration of the truth, not in the meek and gentle spirit of the gospel, but with the cruelty of the worst of tyrants, with the rage and fury of devils. This false and bitter zeal has made the most direful havock even in the bosom of the Christian church, and has filled nations and kingdoms with slaughter and blood. An insatiable thirst for worldly power and greatness, under the mask of holy zeal, has made the *mother of harlots* and *of the abominations of the earth* often drunk with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus Christ. This false zeal has given rise to rebellions, assassinations and massacres, as means to promote what is falsely called the holy catholic

faith. This powerful delusion has made men forget the first principles of religion ; has divested them of the common feelings of humanity ; and made them think, that they did God good service by persecuting their fellow creatures with bonds and chains, with racks and tortures, fire and sword.----But this principle is of a nature directly contrary to that fervency and zeal that ought to adorn the lives of Christians. It is zeal in doing good, zeal in promoting the honour of God, (which in no case can be inconsistent with, nay, which in every instance must promote the happiness of his creatures) that alone is worthy of the followers of Jesus. If our zeal be true and genuine, then, to use the words of a worthy author, divine love will fill its sails, divine wisdom and prudence will give it ballast, and it will have no heat but what is tempered with charity and love.

I PROCEED now to the *Third* thing proposed

posed, which was to show the excellency and happy effects of a spirit of true Christian zeal. This will clearly appear, when we consider, that zeal imports in it, our applying ourselves to all the duties of the Christian life with that warmth of affection, which we ordinarily show in the prosecution of any end to which we are incited by the strongest motives.

WHEN we are engaged in the pursuit of any temporal good, the attainment of which we believe to be of high importance to our happiness ; when we are fully satisfied that our pursuit is not only innocent but laudable, with what keenness and eagerness of mind do we proceed in it? how cheerfully will we undergo every hardship, encounter every difficulty? and what pleasure and satisfaction have we upon our success in it? Now the like, nay a greater fervency and earnestness will the zealous Christian discover in the service of God, and in the performance of all the duties

duties of religion. Opposite to this character is that of indifference and lukewarmness in religion, and the one may serve to throw light upon the other.-----How easily is the lukewarm Christian diverted from his duty? He lays hold of every slight pretence to excuse him in the neglect of it, and is rather pleased than uneasy when under any plausible pretext he can decline it. If no such pretext occurs, and he is actually engaged in the service of God, what a dull formal business does he make of it? how little of that life and spirit appears, which he can show on other occasions? Whatever he does in the service of God, it is but to acquit himself of a task assigned him; and his whole behaviour shows that his heart goes not along with it.

BUT as the zealous Christian will readily embrace every opportunity of doing good, so every interruption or hindrance will be a grief to him, and he will endeavour

deavour to avoid it with care. Conscious as he is, that religion is his great concern, on which his all depends; that it is a thing worthy and honourable in itself, and of the most blessed consequence, he will set about the duties of it with suitable application and intention of mind. These passions and affections which God hath planted in us as the springs of action, which incite and animate others in their lower pursuits, will in him be exerted for a nobler purpose, and will inspire him with activity and vigour, with alacrity and cheerfulness in the good ways of the Lord.

VARIOUS are the figures by which we find this zeal in goodness represented to us in holy scripture; all of them expressive of that fervency and earnestness which I have just now described. Sometimes it is described by allusions to that eager and craving appetite for the refreshment of nature, by a new supply of meat or drink, which is better felt than it can possibly

possibly be described. *Blessed are they*, says our Lord, *that hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is my meat*, says he again of himself, *to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. As the hart*, says David, *panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* This zeal again is represented by the activity and vigour, and earnestness of desire, which was shown by contenders in the public exercises, the mastery in which was esteemed the greatest glory. In allusion to this, we are called to *forget the things that are behind, to stretch forth to the things that are before, that we may attain to the mark and the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* As the Christian life is described in scripture as a continued warfare, so our zeal in performing all the duties of it is exprest by the watchfulness, the resolution and boldness which is required of soldiers engaged in the most dangerous

gerous enterprize, stationed in the most difficult post, surrounded with the most formidable enemies. Thus we are exhorted to be *watchful* and *vigilant*, to *stand fast in the faith*, to *quit ourselves like men*, and *be strong*. To *take unto us the whole armour of God*, that we may be able to *withstand in the evil day*, and *having done all, may stand*. For we *wrestle not with flesh and blood*, but *against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places*.

FROM these things we may be able to form some notion of what it is to be zealous in good works. To go through the several parts of our duty, and to show distinctly how our zeal ought to be employed about them, is what I cannot now propose. The zealous Christian will hold nothing dear, in comparison of the favour of God, and of that holiness which will make him beautiful in the eyes of his Creator. His
soul

soul will *delight in the law of the Lord*, and his desire will be unto him, and the remembrance of his name. With what pleasure and warmth will he apply himself to the duties of devotion and worship? with what joy will his *lips shew forth his greatness*, and *sing of his mercy that endureth for ever*? with what ardour and fervency will he *pour out his heart before him*, and have his recourse unto him, as *his sun and his shield*, as his *rock*, his *fortress*, and his *deliverer*? The *tabernacles of the Lord* will be *amiable* in his sight: *a day in his courts* will be *better than a thousand elsewhere*; and it will be his constant desire, that *all the people may praise the Lord*, and *see his glory*, and *bow before him*; and that *his name may be great, from the rising to the setting sun*.

THE true Christian's zeal for God will also manifest itself in his love and kindness to his brethren of mankind, as they are the offspring of God, and bear his image. He
will

will be zealous in *doing good unto all*, but especially to them who are of the household of faith, and members of that body, whereof *Jesus Christ is the head*. His zeal will shew itself in feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, in providing for the poor and the fatherless, in comforting the dejected and sorrowful, in instructing the ignorant, in reproving with meekness and prudence those who have gone astray, and in bearing with the weaknesses and infirmities of his brethren. This love and benevolence he will not meanly confine to those of one sect or opinion. His zeal indeed will move him to wish and pray, and strive, that Christians may be joined together in the *unity of the Spirit*, and in the purity of the Gospel; and he will *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*: but if his prayers and labours have not their desired success, his zeal will display itself, not in the bitterness of wrath, but in the *abounding of his charity* even to those who differ from him; and these differences

rences in opinion, that must prevail while we are in this world, will chiefly affect his zeal in this way, that they will make him long and aspire the more after that blessed state, where all debate and angry controversy shall cease, and where universal peace and love shall reign for evermore.

I COME now, in the last place, to make some improvement and application of what has been said. And here I might incite you to this zeal in goodness, by laying before you the manifold obligations we are under to it, and the blessed fruits and advantages that will attend it. To insist on these particularly, would carry me beyond the bounds to which I must, in decency, confine myself. Have we any regard to the great end of our being, which is by holiness and goodness to promote the glory of him that made us? Have we any dutifulness or gratitude to that God on whom we depend for all that

we are, have, or hope for? Have we any love to our blessed Redeemer, any concern for his honour, any regard for what he declares to be the great design of his whole kind and merciful undertaking in our behalf? All these things loudly call upon us to be zealous in well-doing. This, as the apostle tells us, is the great end of our election to eternal life ; for *God hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* For this end Christ laid down his life, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works.* For this end he imparts to us the light of his word, the strength and assistance of his Spirit ; for *we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* This is the design of all the great and precious promises of the Gospel, that thereby being made partakers of a divine nature,

nature, we should perfect holiness in the fear of God.

WHAT happy effects would this zeal in goodness have on the peace of our minds? By this alone can we know that our faith is true and unfeigned, if it be in us a lively quickening principle of every virtue and grace, and make us to abound in good works. Hereby we are assured of the truth of our love to God, if it incites us with ardour and fervency to *run in the way of his commandments*. Nay, what blessed effects would this zeal in goodness have on all around us, if we made *our light so to shine before them*, that they *seeing our good works*, were led to *glorify our Father in heaven*. Our *path* would be to them *as the shining light*; and by setting before them all the *beauty of holiness*, would attract and command their imitation. By this zeal we should awake the drowsy, quicken the slothful, strengthen the weak and feeble, and inspire the sincere and upright in heart
with

with a holy emulation. Such happy influence would the example of our zeal have upon our brethren. How much do misery and wretchedness abound in the world? Were it not for this heavenly flame which the divine grace kindles and cherishes in the righteous and the good, in some measure to counteract the sad effects of prevailing corruption and wickedness, this world would soon become a most dismal abode. It is this zeal that provides for the poor and the needy, that protects the injured and oppressed, that comforts the desolate and sorrowful, and makes the *heart of the widow and the fatherless to sing for joy*. It is this zeal which animates that best and noblest charity which respects the souls of men, and their spiritual welfare, affording the means of religion and instruction to those that *sit in darkness*; propagating the knowledge of the Gospel of salvation amongst them, who from their situation and circumstances are excluded from these valuable blessings which we enjoy.

enjoy. And can we conceive, my brethren, any exercise of the Christian's zeal more worthy and commendable than this? Is there any good work to which we are bound by stronger ties of duty and gratitude to God, of love and thankfulness to Jesus the Saviour, of compassion and kindness to our brethren of mankind? Has God blessed us with a clear discovery of his will, and made a glorious light to shine on us who *sat in the shadow of death*? and shall we not pity those who yet lye in ignorance, and contribute all we can to their receiving the knowledge of the truth? Have we a just sense of the horrid barbarity, of the wretched gloomy superstition from which we are delivered, under which so great a part of the world yet groans? do we duly value and esteem the divine goodness towards us? and shall we never think of those who *know not the way of peace*, who are worshipping lying vanities, and bowing down before the works of their own hands? Has God so mercifully,

so

so eminently distinguished us from the rest of mankind, and shall not this oblige us to do all we can in our several stations, that his love may be declared, and his name may be worshipped in the lands where they are not yet known?

THE most zealous Christian indeed in his private capacity, farther than by his earnest prayers and supplications, can do little for the accomplishment of this great and important end. The influence of his most active and unwearied endeavours must at the best be narrow and confined. In the prosecution of this, as of every great design, the observations of *Solomon* will be found to be wise and just, that *two are better than one*, that *a threefold cord is not easily broken*, and that *in a multitude of counsellors there is safety*. In this therefore Christian wisdom and prudence has directed Christian zeal; and has led Christians to associate themselves together for the carrying on this great design; and to

this happy measure we owe any remarkable success it has had in the world. Societies have been erected for propagating Christian knowledge ; by contributing to the support of which, the great and wealthy have had a noble opportunity of honouring God with their substance : and those of meaner circumstances, by offering their mite, have had the occasion of expressing their zeal for his service : societies, where the joint liberality of numbers has produced a fund, in some measure proportioned to so great a design ; and their united counsels have been employed in laying it out to the best and wisest purposes. And blessed be God, that we of this country, poor and indigent as we may be, when compared with others, have not been wanting in this excellent charity ; that we too have a *Society for propagating Christian knowledge*, a conspicuous, and, I hope, a lasting monument of public spirit and of Christian zeal.

THIS

THIS *Society* founded by royal authority, cherished by royal favour, maintained and supported by liberal donations of many noble and worthy persons,---happy in a wise and faithful administration, has extended her cares to the habitations of cruelty and barbarity, and has not, without success, sent the glad tidings of salvation to the dark corners of the earth. That more has not been done for them that are without, has been owing to this melancholy circumstance, that after we have for many ages enjoyed the Gospel, and for some time have been blessed with the purest dispensation of it, there have still been in our own borders such remains of heathen darkness and popish superstition, as naturally claimed the first attention and care, and have reminded the *Society* that charity must begin at home. But after the world has been favoured with so many and distinct accounts of the excellent constitution, the wise regulations, the extensive cares and unwearied labours of this

Society,

Society, it were superfluous to enter into any particular detail.

ALLOW me only to observe, as what must afford us no mean idea of the usefulness of this design, and at the same time may give us comfortable hopes, that this zeal, in so good a work, must be attended with great and important success; allow me, I say, to observe, that besides the ministers and preachers employed in the *Highlands* and *Islands*, and maintained on this fund, and that other which is justly distinguished by the name of the *Royal Bounty*, the *Society*, at this present time, supports in these parts no less than one hundred and thirty one schools, where upwards of seven thousand poor children are instructed, who, most of them, without this charitable provision, must have grown up in the most wretched barbarity and ignorance.

BUT why need we go to such remote
corners

corners for instances of the *Society's* care and concern to promote this great end of their institution, when this very assembly affords us a most conspicuous and convincing proof of it. Long had the condition of the poor of this populous city been matter of grief and regret to every wise and good man; when miserable in themselves, and uneasy to all around them, they passed their uncomfortable lives in beggary, and in idleness, vice and ignorance, its almost constant attendants, and brought up their unhappy children to inherit the same misery and wretchedness. At length the noble plan was laid, which now, by the good hand of God, is so far advanced, and so well established, for feeding our hungry, for clothing our naked, for bringing them that were cast out into houses. And that this charity might not be confined to the relieving the miseries of this present life, the *Society* chearfully embraces this opportunity of promoting Christian knowledge, and kindly lends her helpful

helpful hand for the instruction of those grown up in ignorance, and for the early education of the poor children, to whom their parents were unable or unwilling to afford this blessing, or who had been cast upon the world in a helpless orphan state. What have been the happy effects of this wise and good appointment, there are not a few present who can bear witness. I shall only venture to affirm, that the proficiency of these poor children in the most valuable and useful knowledge, the knowledge of God, and of the principles of our holy religion, will be found to be fully equal to them who have their education in the polite expensive manner, which is now too much in fashion amongst us.

I MUST not, I need not surely detain this audience, after having so far encroached on their patience, with any address to you the honourable, reverend, and worthy members of this *Society*.---You know your duty, and the importance of the design in
which

which you are engaged. You daily feel the inward pleasure that attends the zealous prosecution of it. You know to whom you must look, on whom you must depend for the happy issue of all your labours, and from whom alone you must expect your reward. May God encourage your hearts, and strengthen your hands in this great and excellent work. And may he still more dispose the minds of those to whom he has given wealth and riches, to enlarge your power of doing good. And, by his blessing on the laudable endeavours of this, and such other Christian societies, may the knowledge of the Lord at length *cover the earth, as the waters do the sea.*

F I N I S.